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Mr. Gay's
Convention Sermon,
May 29. 1746.





*The true Spirit of a Gospel-Minister represented,
and urged.*

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

Ministers of the Province

O F T H E

Massachusetts-Bay in New-England,

A T T H E I R

Annual Convention

I N

B O S T O N ;

May 29. 1746.

By EBENEZER GAY,

Pastor of the first Church in *Hingham.*

Luke 9. 55. *But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what Manner of Spirit ye are of.*

Mal. 2. 15. --- *Therefore take Heed to your Spirit.*

B O S T O N :

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the Old South Meeting House. 1746.



At the Anniversary Convention of Ministers of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in NEW-ENGLAND; met at Boston, May 29. 1746.

Voted,



THAT Thanks be given to the Rev. Mr. *Ebenezer Gay*, for his Sermon preach'd before the *Convention* this Day : And that it is agreable to the *Convention* that said Sermon be made Publick.

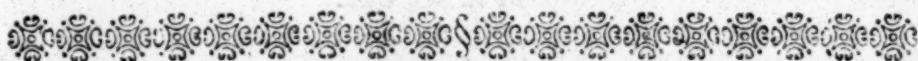
Attest. *Samuel Checkley*, Scriba.





A

Convention-SERMON.



JOHN i. 32.

And John bare Record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven, like a Dove, and it abode upon him,



THE Gospel is CHRIST's Gospel, and should be preached with CHRIST's Spirit. It was so by his first Ministers of it. The same Spirit which descended on him came also upon the *Apostles*, when they were all with one Accord in one Place, on the Day of *Pentecost*. The like gracious Vouchsafement (tho' not in the extraordinary Manner and Effects thereof) is to be desired by us, the Lord's Ministers, who are met together in this Place, on the Day of our annual, brotherly *Convention*. And to prepare our Minds for it, a Discourse on this Text may be seasonable and useful.

This

This Record, which *John the Baptist*, Christ's Fore-runner, bare concerning him, refers to his solemn Inauguration into his mediatorial Office, at his Baptism. *Heaven was then opened, and the Holy Ghost descended from thence, and lighted upon him.* The visible Appearance, in which the Spirit came, abode some Time upon him; the Spirit itself remain'd with him, was constantly resident in him. This was not indeed the first of the Spirit's Coming upon our Saviour; but it was the first which *John* saw, and to which he gave Testimony. The Spirit of God formed Christ's humane Nature, with all it's congenite Principles of Grace and Holiness, free from the least Stain or moral Imperfection. And from his Birth the Spirit was with him, making him gradually, as Man, to increase in Wisdom, as he did in Stature. But when he was entering upon his public Ministry, the Spirit came upon him in a greater Abundance of Gifts, and Graces, and Influences, thoroughly furnishing of him to his Work. Then was he eminently anointed with the *Holy Ghost and with Power*, enabling him to the Discharge of his Office. And particularly as a *Prophet*; which he began with a Sermon on that Passage in *Isai. 61. 1.* *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good Tidings, &c.* This Day, said he, (when he had read the Text) *is this Scripture fulfilled in your Ears* †. In him dwelt the Fulness of the Godhead bodily; and he was not, consider'd in his divine Nature, of himself insufficient for his Undertaking; there was no Defect of Power in him as a divine Person, the mighty God, to be supply'd by the Spirit's descending, and abiding upon him. The humane Nature of Christ was strengthened with a divine Power to his Work; and all the Assistance it had, was by Virtue of it's Union with, and derived from, his divine Nature. But still the Holy Spirit is that Person in the Godhead, by which the Energy of the divine Nature, in its Operations on, and by, Christ's humane Nature was most immediately exerted. In the Power of the Spirit did he preach, and confirm his Doctrine, and finish the Work, which his Father gave him to do on the Earth.

John saw the Spirit descending from Heaven, *like a Dove.*

So say the *Evangelists*, in the Account which they give of it. *Luke* tells us, *the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily Shape, like a Dove, upon him.* Whether the Expression imports,

† *Luke* 4. 18.

that the corporeal Form which the Spirit assum'd and appear'd in, was the very Shape of a *Dove*, or only that the Manner of the Spirit's descending, was like a *Dove's* coming down, with its Wings spread abroad, and so hovering over and lighting upon a Thing; may not be easy for us to determine, and it is not necessary for us to know. Yet, in which of these Senses soever we understand it, it sheweth that there was something in the Spirit's visible Descent upon Christ, resembling a *Dove*, which made the Eye-Witness and inspired Writers make so particular mention of a *Dove* in their Records of it. And 'tis not unreasonable to suppose a Mystery in the Spirit's descending in a *Dove-like Shape*, or in a *Dove-like Manner*: Especially since a *Dove* was reckon'd an Emblem of the Holy Ghost by the ancient Jews. That it was so ordered by God, that there should (as the Baptist and Evangelists testify) be some Resemblance of a *Dove* in the Spirit's descending and resting on Christ, to signify *what Spirit he was of*, and should exercise, in the Discharge of his Office, to which he was in that Manner designed and prepared; viz. a *Dove-like Spirit*. Such was the Spirit that descended and abode upon him, and such was his humane Spirit, having the Characters of the divine Spirit impress'd upon it, when he was sealed with the *Holy Ghost*, at his Baptism; and so was solemnly invested into his Office, and perfectly accomplished for the Performance of it.

The Observation, proper to be the Subject of the present Discourse, from the Text, is this, viz.

That a Dove-like Spirit is a requisite and eminent Qualification of a Gospel Minister.

It being the Spirit of the Lord, by whom the great Salvation at the first began to be spoken; it should, in a good Measure, be found in every One, that after him, and in his Name, preacheth the Gospel of Christ. As will further appear by considering the Properties of a *Dove-like Spirit*.

I. A *Dove-like*, is a *pure Spirit*. The *Dove* was of the Number of clean Birds, in the ceremonial Distinction of 'em, and the only one that was used in Sacrifice to God. *My Dove, my undefiled*, says the spiritual Bridegroom to his Spouse, Cant. 5. 2. A *Dove* is therefore a fit and scriptural Emblem of Purity, which was perfect in the holy and undefiled Jesus, upon

upon whom the Spirit descended like a Dove, qualifying him for, and actuating him in, his holy Ministration. A Dove-like pure Spirit, is called in Scripture, *a pure Mind, a pure Heart, a pure Conscience*. If any Distinction be conceived between these, yet each of 'em comprehends the other, and a pure Spirit all. It is (as renewed in fallen Man) a Spirit cleansed from the Defilements of Sin, consecrated, and made holy to God, thro' Sanctification of his Spirit, and in which there is no Guile prevailing: A good and honest Heart, endowed with Simplicity and godly Sincerity. Such ought the Spirit of a Gospel Minister, conformable to his divine Master's, to be.

His *Relation* to God supposes and requires it: Being assum'd into a near and constant Attendance upon him, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Evil. This is that the Lord spake with Respect to the Priest's especially, his Ministers under the Law, (and the Reason of it is the same, and stronger, in Regard to those under the Gospel) *I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me* *; will be approached and served as a holy God. There is no Man, no Minister, that hath a just and lively Apprehension of the infinite Purity of that God, with whom he hath to do, and before whom the *Seraphim* cover their Faces, and their Feet, crying one to another, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts*, but will be ready to say as the *Prophet* did, upon the visional Representation thereof to him, *Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a Man of unclean Lips* †, and 'till his Iniquity is taken away and Sin purged, as *Isaiah's* was, wou'd dare to answer, as he did, when one was called for to go on a divine Embassy, *Here am I, send me*. Answerable to the relative Holiness of a Minister, in his special Dedication to the Lord, there ought to be real Holiness of Heart and Life, in a sincere and intire Devotedness unto him.

As he represents God by Office, he should be like him in Disposition: And being peculiarly God's Servant, be distinguish'd by his Sanctity. Otherwise he disparageth the Holiness of that Majesty, in whose Presence he stands, and in whose Name he ministers. If he serve God with any Condescence, and to divine Acceptation, he must do it with a pure Conscience.

A pure Spirit suits with the *Nature* and *End* of his Office. It is a Gospel pure in its Doctrines and Ordinances, that is

* Levit. 10. 3. † Isai. 6.

committed to his Trust and Administration. It is pure and undefiled Religion, which he is ordain'd to propagate and advance. His Spirit therefore must be pure, that it may agree with his Work. *Be ye clean, that bear the Vessels of the Lord* ||.

But such a Spirit, not only *corresponds* with the Sacredness of this Work, but *qualifies* for the Performance of it. The Work indeed may possibly be done by a Man whose Heart is not right with God in it. And one of this Character may be an Instrument, in the Hand of God's free Spirit, of sanctifying and saving others. Yet, much every Way is the Advantage of a pure Spirit, toward the discharging this Office well, and to good Effect. 2 Tim. 2. 21. *If a Man purge himself from these* (gnostick Pollutions, Lusts of the Flesh, and of the Mind) *he shall be a Vessel unto Honour, sanctified and made meet for the Master's Use, and prepared unto every good Work.* He must be sanctified, that he may be duly fitted for this Service of Christ; and prepar'd, in Respect of Ability and Inclination, to every Part of his Duty therein.--- *Be apt to teach*: Furnish'd with Knowledge, and *shewing in Doctrine Uncorruptness, Gravity, Sincerity, sound Speech that cannot be condemned.* A pure Spirit searches impartially after Truth, and is best capable of discovering it: Being free from those corrupt Affections, & vicious Habits, ill Prejudices & base Designs, which cloud and darken the Understanding, bribe and pervert the Judgment. What Clearness is to the Eye of the Body, That Purity is to the Eye of the Mind. A pure Heart receives the Love of the Truth: And the Mystery of Faith is held in a pure Conscience. Purity does not intitle any Man to Infallibility, yet it does to the Promise of sure Guidance into all necessary Truth. John 7. 17. *If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine.* Such a Man is liable to err from the Truth, but shall not fundamentally and finally. He is most secure from all damnable Heresies, and most likely to recover out of any considerable Mistakes he may fall into. Faith and a good Conscience are fastest held together: They who have put away the latter, *concerning Faith have made Shipwreck* *. "A good Conscience, and a true Faith, like *Hypocrates's* Twins, live and die together." The Teachers of false Doctrine, in the apostolic Age, are characteris'd as Men of *corrupt Minds, Ungodly, Sensualists, filthy Dreamers, Brute-beasts.*

|| Isai. 52. 11. * 1 Tim. 1. 19.

Such were the *Gnostics*, *Nicolaitans*, and other impure Heretics, with whose monstrous Opinions the christian Church was early infested. And in the *Papal Apostacy*, abominable Doctrines have evidently their Rise from the vile Lusts of the *Man of Sin*. And the Missionaries of *Rome*, that spread them, are of the Number of *unclean Spirits*, which *John* saw, like *Frogs*, come out of the *Mouth of the Dragon*, and out of the *Mouth of the Beast*, and out of the *Mouth of the false Prophet* *. Of the Seducers in his Time, he saith, 1 John 4. 5. *They are of the World, therefore speak they of the World*---are of a worldly Spirit, and therefore preach Doctrines suitable to worldly Lusts and Interests. *Jude* || describing the same false Teachers, calls them, *ungodly Men, turning the Grace of God into Lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*: By their representing free Grace, discovered in the Gospel, as full Indulgence granted to the Lusts of Uncleanness, and denying Christ to be a Saviour as he is *the Lord*, rejecting him in his Kingly Office especially.

A pure Spirit is cautelous against the Abuse of the *Doctrines of Grace*; understanding and explaining them as Doctrines according to Godliness, and designed to promote universal Holiness. --- *Election of Grace*, thro' Sanctification of the Spirit unto Obedience: To the Means, as well as to the End.--- *Redemption* from the Curse of the Law, as a special Engagement to keep the Commandments of God.--- *Effectual Vocation* to be unto Holiness, and the Operations of the divine Spirit therein, as not excluding humane Endeavours after Grace, or superceding all use of our enfeebled Faculties in the Work of it.--- *Justifying Faith* as receiving whole Christ, not dividing his Offices, nor substituting his Obedience in the Place of ours. --- *Perseverance* in Grace, to be accomplished in a way of continual Circumspection, and dutiful Diligence, working out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling.

Not that when Hurt is done to the Cause of true Holiness, by zealous Advocates for Grace, it is always to be imputed to the Pravity of their Minds, and doth argue them Patrons of Licentiousness; yet a pure Spirit will make a Minister careful in establishing peculiar Doctrines of the Gospel, not to undermine, or impair practical Christianity; never to speak disparagingly of Things divinely excellent; and will hardly

* Rev. 16. 13. || Verse 4.

suffer him to call *Good Works* *abominable*, which he is to affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, ought to maintain.

Purity, considered in Opposition, not only to *moral Pollution*, but also to *Hypocrisy*, is requisite to qualify a Minister, and will dispose him to all Fidelity in his Office, and is a happy Advantage to his comfortable and successful Discharge of it. When his Eyes, like a *Dove's Eyes* † (not looking adulterously upon others, the mean Things of this World) *have a Respect to the holy One of Israel* † : When he hath a sincere Regard to God---To his Will and Command, to his Presence, Acceptance and Honour : When his Intentions are upright, and his Sentiments agree with his Words & Actions, and there is no Guile in his Spirit, nor Dissimulation in his Behaviour toward God or Men. But he is fair and open, not wrapping himself in Clouds ; not concealing his real Principles under the Ambiguity of Expressions ; not disguising any bad Purposes, with fallacious Pretences of Concern for the Glory of God, the Interest of Religion, and the Good of Souls---not laying of Snares to catch Men ; Baits to allure them into any Mischief, or Inconvenience---not using any Art of Deceit, treacherous Collusions, sycophantic Detractions, servile Crouchings and Fawnings : But having a good Conscience, in all Things willing to live honestly. *We are not* (says the Apostle, 2 Cor. 2. 17.) *as many, which corrupt the Word of God : But as of Sincerity, but as of God, in the Sight of God speak we in Christ*---i. e. As Men of Sincerity, who speak and act as in the Sight of God, do not sophisticate and adulterate the pure Word of God---Chap. 4. Verse 2. *But have renounced the hidden Things of Dishonesty, not walking in Craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by Manifestation of the Truth, commending our selves to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God.* A pure Spirit is abhorrent from all that *Sleight of Men, and cunning Craftiness*, whereby they lie in wait to deceive---It detests those feigned Speeches, and plausible Ways, by which false Teachers beguile unwary Souls, and lead 'em into dangerous Errors---that *Covetousness*, thro' which, under the Cloke of extraordinary Love to, Merchandise is made of the People---that *Ambition*, which in the Dress of voluntary Humility, gains their Admiration

† Cant. 1. 15. † Isai. 17. 7.

and Applause. It dreads that Character and Curse in Hof. 9. 8. *The Prophet is a Snare of a Fowler in his Ways, and Hatred in the House of his God.*

A pure Spirit keeps a Minister *steady* in his Course, pursuing, by even Steps, the worthy Ends of his Office, thro' all the Temptations and Oppositions he meets with, to divert and discourage him. It pointeth him to Marks which are fix'd, and always in the same Place; directs him in a straight Path, by an invariable Rule; and he proceedeth uniformly in his Work, not changing with the Wind of a vertiginous World, the varying Circumstances of Place and Time, the fickle Humours of Men, and uncertain Contingencies of Affairs. A Man of this Spirit, is consistent with himself, is the same, as to his Faith and Practice of what is necessary and substantial Truth and Duty, in all Countries, in all Cases, and in all Conditions---“The moral Reason of Things being every where, and always, the same”. Let the Weather be fair or foul; let the World smile or frown; let him be followed or forsaken by the Multitude; let him be prospered or disappointed; he holds on his Way, passing by *Honour and Dishonour, evil Report and good Report.* He does not prevaricate in the Lord's Message, and play fast and loose for sinister Ends. His Preaching, like the great Subject of it, Christ Jesus, is the same; not *Yea* at one Time, and *Nay* at another. 2 Cor. 1. 18, 19. *But as God is true, our Word toward you was not Yea and Nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us,---was not Yea and Nay, but in him was Yea.* The Influence of such a Spirit was suspended in *Peter and Barnabas*, when they withdrew from the *Gentile-Converts*, meerly to please some *Jewish Bigots*, they *dissembled, walked not uprightly, according to the Truth of the Gospel*, Gal. 2. 11. The Case is there recorded, for a perpetual Warning against all such Diffimulation. For as low as the Attainment is in the Eyes of some, 'tis of no small Consequence that a christian Minister be an *honest Man*.

Conducted by a pure Spirit, a Minister in *Simplicity and godly Sincerity* hath his Conversation in the World, and is an Example of the Believers in Purity. And observes that cautionary Direction, in 1 Tim. 5. 22. *Lay Hands suddenly on no Man, neither be Partaker of other Men's Sins: Keep thy self pure.*

Whatsoever

Whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, does he think on, diligently study, preach and exemplify.---The Wisdom that is from above, qualifying a Gospel Minister, is first pure---then peaceable.---And so,

2. A Dove-like, is a *harmless* Spirit. The Dove, an antient Emblem of Peace, is propounded by our Saviour as a Pattern of Innocence; *be harmless as Doves* †, said he to his Disciples, when he sent them to the lost Sheep of the House of *Israel*. A Dove-like, harmless Spirit, is the Spirit of Love; which worketh no Ill to his Neighbour: A Spirit free from Malignity, and mischievous Design: A Disposition by which a Man is averse from, and avoids doing wrong to any. Tho' Purity and Innocence seem to imply each other, or to be the same Thing, yet in the Degree wherein they are found in imperfect Men, they are seperable Qualities, or, at least, may have a distinct Consideration with us. So far indeed as a Man is possess'd of the former, he is of the latter also; yet something further is required to his having the latter than the former. His Spirit may be predominated pure, and yet not inculpably harmless. Its Purity is inoffensive, yet may be accompanied with something that is noxious. There may be true Sanctity, and godly Sincerity, where there is not a competent Measure of Prudence, to keep from offending. It is not enough, that the Spirit be free from damning Pollution, and reigning Hypocrisy, but also from whatever is accidentally, tho' it be not in its own Nature, hurtful. Conscience should be void of Offence toward God, and toward Man. Purity might suffice to its being so toward God, if it were under no Obligation to be so likewise toward Men; who are apt to be offended at more than what is in it self Evil, which, were it not for their Sakes, God would not be. A pure Spirit thinks on whatsoever Things are true, honest, just, pure; a harmless Spirit further, on whatsoever Things are *lovely*, amiable in the Sight of Men, and *of good Report* among them. This Ingredient therefore of a Dove-like Spirit, further qualifies a Gospel Minister; who, in the Discharge of his Office, need be more inoffensive, than Purity (alone and imperfect) renders him. He ought to shun the *Appearance of*

† Matth. 10. 16.

Evil, what seems and proves so to others, as well as that which is in it self *Evil*.

As this was a distinct Branch of our Lord's Character, so it may be consider'd of a good Minister's of Christ, additional to that of Purity. Such an high Priest became us who is *holy, harmless*. It behoves every one that officiates in sacred Things, to be so likewise; that he, after the Example of the innocent Jesus, do *no Violence*, and give *no Offence*, in Cases wherein we may with a pure Conscience avoid it. Indeed, accidentally and eventually, thro' the Perverseness of Men, Christ, who denounced Wo to that Man by whom Offence cometh, was a Stone of Stumbling and Rock of Offence. Yet he never gave any just Occasion of the least---for the Prevention thereof, we find him complying with received Customs, and paying of Tribute, not due from him. It may be impossible, but that Offences will come, upon a Minister's Fidelity in his Office: What is required of him is, to see to it, that they do not arise thro' his Default.---That he guard his Words and Actions with such Care, guide his Affairs with such Discretion, as that he may yield no Occasion, yea, may cut off all Occasion, of Disgust or Scandal--of any Man's falling into Sin, becoming disaffected to Religion, or discouraged in the Practice of his Duty---*Giving no Offence in any Thing, that the Ministry be not blamed*, and Souls hurt and destroyed.

A harmless Spirit makes a Minister to comport with the Weaknesses of People, to forego his own Profit and Ease, to part with his just Liberty, Pleasure and Satisfaction, rather than any Damage shou'd accrue unto them. It dispos-s him to please them in all Things, wherein he may without displeasing God, and for their spiritual Advantage, 1 Cor. 10. 32, 33. *Give none Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God. Even as I please all Men in all Things, not seeking mine own Profit, but the Profit of many, that they may be saved.*

A harmless Spirit in a Preacher, that is wise, and would teach the People Knowledge, gives good Heed, and seeks to find out *acceptable Words*, as well as *Words of Truth*; Words that may not scandalize any against the Truth which he delivers. A Minister may offend in Word, when he does not err in Doctrine: May occasion many to stumble at the Law, by the uncooth Phrases in which he expresses it. A great Hindrance

drance this is to the ready Reception of divine Truths, and much Hurt hath been done to Religion, by the unguarded or affected Language of hearty Friends to it.

Tho' a harmless Spirit will not suffer a Minister to keep back any Thing, which is for the Profit of his Hearers ; or shun to declare the whole Council of God, lest they should pervert it to their Damage ; yet it may restrain him from saying many Things, when they *cannot bear them as yet* ; and the unseasonable insisting on 'em, wou'd be likely to hinder the Entertainment of more necessary Truths, and the Practice of greater Duties.

Tho' it will not make him indifferent as to the Prevalence or Suppression of any Errors and Disorders, and neutral in all Controversies that arise, yet will it make him, in opposing that which is bad, careful that he destroy not that which is good : And to bear with some Things amiss, that are tolerable, rather than occasion others, that are more hurtful ;---to be content with the silent Enjoyment of his own Thoughts about some Things, which are not of great Moment : And cautious of stirring up, or meddling with, any Strife, in which all that is contended for, is not worth the Time and Pains employ'd upon it : And all the Advantages gain'd by a Victory, will not countervail the Damages sustain'd in the Combat.

Tho' such a Spirit *cannot bear with them that are Evil*--scandalously so, yet is it not hasty to gather up the *Tares*, lest it should root up also the *Wheat* with them.

This harmless Spirit, is not (according to the vulgar Idea of it) a weak Mind, an insignificant Soul, an inept, inefficacious Temper ; by which a Man is not capable of doing either Good or Hurt ; but is rather a *Wise Man's Heart*, that *discerneth both Time and Judgment*---a vigilant Spirit, a heedful Disposition, by which a Man guards against whatever may Prejudice the Success of the Gospel, and Salvation of Souls. This Innocency dwells with Prudence---and Ministers need be *wise as Serpents*, that they may be *harmless as Doves*.

3. A Dove-like, is a *meek and gentle Spirit*. So remarkably mild a Creature is the Dove, as gave occasion for the common Saying, that it is *without Gall*. A Man that has the due Government of his Passions, that moderates Anger ; and keeps it, amidst all Provocations, within the Bounds of Reason and Religion, is of a Dove-like Spirit.

Such

Such was the Spirit of *Jesus* most conspicuously and exemplarily, in his Management of the Work given him to do on the Earth. And such ought the Spirit of every Minister of *Christ* to be, that he may discharge his Office well and successfully. 2 Tim. 2. 24. *The Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach.* He must be gentle toward all Men, that he may be apt to teach. A meek Spirit is predisposed to receive, and impart the Knowledge of divine Things. The *Prophet* was unfit for the Illapses of God's Spirit, and to declare his Mind, 'till the ruffled Passions of his own were calm'd by a *Minstrel*, 2 Kings 3. 15. The Spirit descends, in the ordinary Gifts of Prophecy, upon the Meek. Psal. 25. 9. *The Meek will he teach his Way*: And enable them to teach it. A gentle is the only effectual Method of Instruction to be used, not only toward the simply Ignorant, but also toward the perverse Opposers of the Truth. *In Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth.* Which intimates, that gentle and meek Treatment, is the most likely Way to convert Men from Error to Truth, from Sin to Righteousness. Soft Words are more efficacious to these good Purposes, than sharp Invectives; calm Reasonings, than contentious Wranglings. It is a part of the negative Character of a *Bishop*, that he be no *Striker*, not a *Brawler*, not soon angry. And the Reason is plain; for *the Wrath of Man* worketh not the Righteousness of God.

He that winneth Souls is wise. Sinners are won to *Christ*, and their Duty, by the sweet Invitations and Arguments of divine Grace; not driven with the boisterous Wind of human Passion: Are drawn with the Cords of a Man, the Bands of Love: Are not meerly affrighted or forced, but charm'd into a Surrender to the Lord. And they to whom the Word of Reconciliation is committed, being Ambassadors for *Christ*, as tho' God did beseech Sinners by them, do *pray them to be reconciled to God*. Not but that there is always Occasion for a Preacher to cry aloud, in shewing People their Transgressions, and to rebuke them sharply for their Awakening and Amendment. He ought to contend earnestly for the Faith, and with some Warmth to plead for God's Honour. He is not to be mealy-mouth'd, and, as *Ephraim, like a silly Dove without Heart*, Hos. 7. 11. There is a Sort of Meekness as opposite to holy Zeal, as it is to unhallowed Anger. As all
Meekness

Meekness is not lawful, so all Anger is not sinful. The meek *Jesus looked round about on his obdurate Hearers with Anger* †. Yet true christian Meekness is the Moderatrix of just Anger, guides the Passion with Discretion, tempers it with Charity, and keeps it from turning into Fury : Which worse becomes a *Minister* of the Gospel, than a *Prophet* under the Law. It is thought by good Expositors, that the great and *strong Wind, the Earthquake, and Fire* ; and after these the *still small Voice*, with which *Elias* (a Man subject to like Passions as we are) was entertain'd at *Horeb* *, were design'd to check the excessive Fervour of Spirit, the disorderly Passion, which mix'd itself with his Zeal for GOD ; and to make him more mild in his Censures, and more meek and patient in his Endeavours and waiting for the Conversion of *Israel*, wherein he might sooner expect GOD's Presence, and blessed Success, than in the Storm of Anger or Impatience. His eager and hot Spirit might be apt to carry him too far into Methods of Rigour and Severity. When two of Christ's Disciples would in their Zeal for him, have done as *Elijah* did, in an extraordinary Case, he rebuked them, saying, *Ye know not what Manner of Spirit ye are of* †- blam'd 'em for not knowing, not considering how unsuitable to the Gospel Dispensation a fiery wrathful Spirit is. The Interest of Religion, the Cause of Truth is not served by it.

The Meekness of Wisdom is necessary to a right Use of the *Key of Government*, in opening and shutting, admitting to and excluding from Sacraments, executing of Censures, and administering all Things which belong to the Order of the Gospel, the due Regulation of christian Worship and Society. The ruling Power which a Gospel Minister is invested with, is spiritual and pastoral only : Not to be exercis'd and maintain'd by external Force, or Methods of Violence, toward the Estates or Bodies of Men ; but by the *Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God* : By Instruction, Exhortation, Admonition, Reproof : In all meek and gentle Ways that are directly influential on the Mind and Conscience. The inflicting of bodily Diseases on obstinate, contumacious Offenders, and delivering them over to *Satan*, (if it means any Thing more than declaring them to belong to his Kingdom, and except they repent, to be consign'd by a righteous Sentence of GOD to the Fire prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels) was an extraor-

† Mark 3. 5. * 1 Kings 19. 11. † Luke 9. 55.

dinary Way of revenging Disobedience, peculiar to the *Apostles*, who were extraordinarily guided in the Use of it. And it is well for the poor Church, that this Power is not continued, since the infallible Direction of the holy Spirit is withdrawn. Tho' a strict Discipline is to be kept up in the christian Church, yet the Nature and Design of it require this to be done in the Spirit of Meekness. A rash and hasty Administration, is as bad as a cowardly, or careless, Relaxation of it. The *Key* seldom goes right in the Hand of a passionate, violent Man. Discipline is an Edge-Tool, and mad Work is often made with it by angry Ecclesiasticks. That Direction may be especially intended for Governours of the Church, which the Apostle gives in Gal. 6. 1. *Brethren, if a Man be overtaken in a Fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the Spirit of Meekness*—alluding to the Caution and Tenderness used in the Reduction of dislocated, and setting of broken Bones.

A meek Spirit conducts a Minister to a suitable Behaviour under the ill Treatment he meets with, in the Discharge of his Office—helps to bear aright the causeless Hatred and Contempt, Obloquy and Affronts, and all Kinds of Misusage, which he suffers from an ill-natur'd World, an ungrateful People, and peevish *Brethren*—Men of the same Profession. It disposes him to follow the Example of the blessed *Jesus*, who, *when he was reviled, reviled not again: When he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously—endured the Contradiction of Sinners against himself.*—And of his *Apostles*, whose Demeanor under the greatest Reproaches and Injuries is thus set forth, 1 Cor. 4. 11, 12, 13. *Even unto this present Hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and buffeted, and have no certain Dwelling-Place; and Labour, working with our own Hands: Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: We are made the Filth of the World, and are the Off-scouring of all Things unto this Day.* Continual and various Occasion, hath a Minister for the Exercise of Meekness: Especially, when his People are froward, and will strive with him; giddy, and forsake him; penurious, and withhold Maintenance from him. Happy is it when none of these Things so disturb, and discourage his Spirit, but that he goes on calmly and resolutely in his Work; not being overcome of Evil, but overcoming Evil with Good. Meekness hath Charms to tame the fiercest Spirit, to mollify the hardest Heart, to still the most virulent Tongue,

Tongue, and subdue inveterate Prejudice.—And if it does not open a clung and parsimonious Hand, yet it supplies the Wants of a contented Soul : In which Sense (partly) we may understand our Saviour's Words, in Matth. 5. 5. *Blessed are the Meek : For they shall inherit the Earth.* A Minister need be *gentle among his People, as a Nurse cherisheth her Children ;* bearing with their Frowardness and manifold Infirmities—*patient, not rigidly exacting his Due*—And in the Straits of worldly Circumstances, be satisfied with that Word of *Christ* to the Angel of the Church in Smyrna, *I know thy Poverty, (but thou art rich.)* *

4. A Dove-like, is a *humble and condescending* Spirit. The Dove's Flight is low to that of the soaring Eagle—and humble Penitents are in Scripture compar'd to *Doves of the Valleys* †. Humility therefore may be taken into the Description of a Dove-like Spirit. This is near a-kin to the last mentioned Property of such a Spirit, and is necessary thereunto. Meekness and Humility are join'd together in our Saviour's Character of himself ; and as recommending Qualities of so excellent and divine a Teacher as he was—Matth. 11. 29.—*Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart.* That humble Mind which was in him, should be also in every Minister of *Christ Jesus*, that he may be fit for his Office, and useful in it. This will be of great Advantage to his Preaching, with respect both to the Matter, and the Manner of it : Disposing him to temper his Speech to the Capacities and Needs of People ; not soaring above them in airy subtil Speculations, and high-flown Expressions—*great swelling Words of Vanity*, to make Ostentation of his Gifts, and gain the Applauses of the simple Multitude, that admire what they don't understand. 2 Cor. 2. 1. *I, Brethren, when I came unto you, came not with Excellency of Speech, or of Wisdom, declaring unto you the Testimony of God.* Such a Minister stands not on God's holy Mount, as on a Theatre, to act his Part ; and as on a Step to Self-Exaltation. He preaches, not *himself*, but *Christ Jesus the Lord* : Usurps not a Dominion over the Faith and Consciences of any, by urging his private Opinion as the Doctrine and Law of *Christ*, and imperiously obtruding his Sense of Scripture, for Scripture it self—the Standard of Truth, and Measure of Duty. He assumes not Infallibility to himself, affects not to be called of

* Rev. 2. 8. † Ezek. 7. 16.

Men, *Rabbi*; and thinks not himself too great to be their Servant for *Jesus* Sake.

A humble Spirit is fittest for Government in the christian Church, where the spiritual Pastors are not to exercise the *Lordship*, which secular Princes are wont to do, in ruling with a high Hand, and according to their own Will and Pleasure. Ministers are intrusted by Christ with an Authority for the Good of Men's Souls, and they are to use it faithfully and humbly, *not as being Lord's over God's Heritage.* †

A humble is an impartial Spirit, which it concerns a Minister to have; that all Souls may be of equal Consideration with him; and he may regard the Poor, in his Watching and labouring for them, as much as the Rich. He is *charged before God, and the Lord Jesus, and the elect Angels, to observe these Things*, the apostolical Rules of Conduct toward People, *without preferring one before another, doing nothing by Partiality.* ‡ And he is further engaged by the Example of his Lord, who preached the *Gospel to the Poor*, and mentions this as one Evidence of his being the Messiah—*Matth. 11. 5.* because it was foretold of him, that he would *feed the Poor of the Flock* *. He was as ready to instruct the poor Woman of *Samaria* at *Jacob's Well*, (his Disciples marvelling that he talked with her) as to teach in the crowded Synagogues of the Jews, where the Eyes of all Sorts were fastned on him, and their Wonder at his Doctrine rais'd to Astonishment. He stooped to the meanest Offices for the meanest Persons—A Minister of such a Spirit, “ Can gladly attend and wait upon the poorest Kind of People. He is daily watching over the weak and infirm; humbling himself to perverse, rude, ignorant People wherever he can find them: And is so far from desiring to be considered as a *Gentleman*, that he desires to be used as the Servant of all; and in the Spirit of his *Lord* and Master girds himself, and is glad to stoop down, and wash any of their Feet.”

A humble Spirit renders a Minister agreeable and profitable in his Conversation; invites the People's Applications to him, encourages them to seek the Law at his Mouth, being courteous and easy of Access, ready to impart his Counsel and Help to every one that asks it, whereas a haughty Spirit, an arrogant Air, a lordly Deportment, makes him abhorred of God, and shunned, if not despised by Men.—False Teachers

† 1 Pet. 5. 3. ‡ 2 Tim. 5. 21. * Zech. 11. 7.

are characteris'd as *Boasters, Proud, Despisers of those that are good, high-minded*. Pride is the *Devil's Sin*; and unmortify'd in a Minister will inevitably procure his Fall into the *Condemnation of the Devil* *. And many, great and sad Mischiefs accrue to the Church of GOD from it—Encroachments in the Rights, Invasion of the Liberties, Intrusion into the Offices of the Church—Errors, Disorders, Heresies, Schisms, Wrath, Strife, Emulations, Confusions, and all Manner of evil Works in it. A proud and ambitious Clergy is the Bane of the Church.

Under a Pretence of magnifying his Office, let not a Minister be lordly and over-bearing in the Exercise of it, lofty and imperious in his Carriage toward any, let him not treat the very meanest and worst in his Parish with supercilious Fastidiousness, as if he scorn'd to *set them with the Dogs of his Flock*.--- He does most honour his Office, and himself too, by lowness of Mind and Behaviour. A humble, is not a servile, base, and abject Spirit, as the Proud and Arrogant deem it. It does not make a Man *crouch for a Piece of Silver, and Morsel of Bread* † :—meanly sue to be put into the Priest's Office,--- and by sordid Compliances to keep in it, for the Sake of a poor Livelihood. But it is a truly noble, and becoming Disposition; proper to a high-born, and well-educated Soul, that being acquainted with Things excellent, doats not upon Trifles, nor admires little Things meerly because they are one's own: Boasts not of Attainments in Knowledge or Goodness hitherto reached, but is still aspiring to higher; and aiming at a greater Reward than the Praise of Men. Humility, while it seems to carry in the Name and Notion of it, a Depression, is truly the Elevation of the Spirit. *Whoever* (says Christ to his Disciples, ambitious each of them to have the chief Place of Honour) *shall humble himself as this little Child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven* †. The humblest is the most honourable Minister in the Church of GOD. Paul came not behind the very Chiefest of the Apostles, while in his own Esteem, he was not worthy to be called one, and was less than the least of all Saints, serving the Lord with all Humility of Mind.

5. A Dove-like is a *tender and compassionate* Spirit. The Dove has a mournful Kind of Tone; several Passages in Scripture allude to it. *I did mourn as a Dove*, said *Hezekiah* ||,

* 1 Tim. 3. 6. † 1 Sam. 2. † Mat. 18. 4. || Isai. 38. 14. relating

relating his Frame and Behaviour in his Sickness. *We mourn sore like Doves* * ; say the People in great Affliction. *They that escape of them, says the Prophet, shall be like Doves of the Valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his Iniquity* †. *Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her Maids shall lead her as with the Voice of Doves, tabring upon their Breasts* ‡.

Our Lord *Jesus Christ* was a Man of Sorrows, of great Tenderness of Spirit, appearing in his mournful Resentments of his own grievous Sufferings, breathing in all his Sermons, discover'd in all his compassionate Endeavours for the Relief and Salvation of a miserable World of Sinners. Such a Spirit ought a Minister of the Gospel to have, mourning first for his own Sins, (which Christ had no need of) and then, after the Example of Christ, for the Sins and Sufferings of Others.—A Spirit apt to be affected and afflicted with the Miseries of Mankind, especially those that are incident to their Souls.—A pitiful Disposition toward them under the manifold and sad Evils, which oppress them in this, and await them in a future World. This would engage his solicitous, faithful Endeavours to relieve and save them—to instruct the Ignorant ; to warn the Wicked, Night and Day, with Tears ; to seek the lost, and bring back the straying Sheep, to strengthen the Diseased, and bind up that which is broken ; to speak a Word in Season to him that is Weary—to exhort and comfort, and charge every One, as a Father doth his Children—to visit and sympathize with the Afflicted in all their Troubles, outward and spiritual, and offer up Prayers and Supplications for them, with strong Crying and Tears, according to their particular Necessities. The Minister that is endowed with such a Spirit, can say as *Paul* ||, Who is weak, and I am not weak ? Who is offended, and I burn not ? i. e. with fervent Compassion. The Sight of poor Creatures, miserable in Sin ready to perish, nearly obnoxious to eternal Death, yet thoughtless of their own wretched Circumstances, and sporting themselves on the Brink of Hell, toucheth his Heart, stirs his Bowels, with compassionate Anguish ; and opens his Mouth in affectionate Calls unto them, to turn and live : And makes him think nothing too much for him to do or suffer, that he may prevent their everlasting Destruction. He is hardly ever

* *Isai.* 57. 11. † *Ezek.* 7. 16. ‡ *Nah.* 2. 7. || *2 Cor.* 11. 29.

satisfied with any Degrees of Care and Watchfulness and Labour for their Salvation—counts not his Time and Strength, yea, Life itself too dear to be spent in such charitable Service, how unworthily soever Men requite him therefor. He can use the Apostle's melting Speeches to those whom he longs after in the Bowels of Jesus Christ. *I will very gladly spend and be spent for your Souls, tho' the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved* *. *I say the Truth in Christ, I lie not, my Conscience also bearing me Witness in the holy Ghost. That I have great Heaviness, and continual Sorrow in mine Heart. For I could wish my self were accursed from Christ, (excommunicated from his Church) for my Brethren* †. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own Souls, because ye were dear unto us ‡. Such Tenderness of Affection and Concern for the most obstinate Sinners, may have a good Effect upon them; and the Minister's Tears soften the hard Hearts, on which his Words alone (how right and forcible soever) make no Impression.

A due Commiseration of the Necessities of Souls, wou'd excite a Minister to go (if he be at Liberty, and have Opportunity) among those who suffer a *Famine of Hearing the Word of the Lord*, rather than among those who enjoy a great Plenty of the Means of Instruction. Paul strived to preach, not where Christ was named, and a good Foundation of christian Knowledge laid, and there were others to carry on the Superstructure, but where, by his Ministry, there might be an Accomplishment of *Isaiah's* Prophecy, as it is written, *To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: And they that have not heard, shall understand* ||. Commendable is the Love they discover to Souls, who preach the Gospel, in those Places of this Land, where it was little known, and as little is done for the Support of it. May the Blessing of Souls ready to perish come upon these Servants of Christ, and no proper Encouragement we can give, be with-held from them.

That such Ministers do as well, as they seem to zealously affect the Souls of People, who, overlooking those which are most destitute of the Gospel, strive to preach it only or chiefly in Places, where there are fixed and faithful Pastors, remains still to be proved by them.

* 2 Cor. 12. 15. † Rom. 9. 1, 2, 3. ‡ 1 Thes. 2. 8.

|| Rom. 15. 20, 21.

More concern'd have I been, to reconcile with our Profession, the general Backwardness in the Ministers of the Lord to attend his *Ark* into the *Camp*, and go over to the Help of our poor Brethren, whom we mightily encourag'd to jeopard their Lives, as they have done, and lost in great Numbers, for the Preservation of their Country. The Lord pardon us wherein we have been wanting in our Compassion to their Souls ! Were a Minister's Heart really affected with the Miseries of poor, blind, perishing Souls, in Proportion to the Greatness thereof, what Toils and Travels would he not undertake ? What Hardships wou'd he not undergo, what Hazard wou'd he not expose himself to, for the Sake of their Salvation.

6. A Dove-like, is a *sociable, uniting* Spirit. Doves go in Flocks, resort to their Windows, and live amicably together. Ministers should go Hand in Hand, in sweet Fellowship, to the Work whereunto they are called, and dwell together in Unity : Never separating in Affection from one another. They are of all Men obliged most strictly to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. Their peculiar Relation unto Christ, to one another, and to the Church of God, is a peculiar Engagement upon them hereunto.

They are Ministers of *Jesus Christ* ; his Servants, by way of Excellency so styled. And is *Christ divided* ? Divisions among them wou'd seem to imply it : As if there were more *Christs*, more *Lords* than One, each different Sect of Ministers calling him *Master*, and professing to manage his Business, and to drive on his Designs, which we cannot suppose to be opposite, without injurious Reflection on the *one Lord Jesus Christ*, sole Head of the spiritual Kingdom, not divided against itself.

Ministers are Stewards of God. And what Disorder would it cause in his Family, redounding to his Discredit, for them to quarrel about the Distribution of his Children's Bread.

They are Ambassadors, for *Christ the Prince of Peace*. And if they be not at Peace among themselves, how well do they represent his Person, and carry on a Treaty of Peace ?

Ministers are *Fellow-Servants, Fellow-Labourers, Fellow-Soldiers* : Employ'd in the same Work and Warfare, and encouraged by the same Rewards, being called in one Hope of their Calling—and therefore should be *dear* to one another, and

and *Fellow-Helpers* unto the Kingdom of God. The Tie of brotherly Love should keep them in the closest Union, for mutual Assistance and Comfort. The Violation of this Bond, is an aggravated Fault in them, when, *lo, they have given the Hand*---the Right Hand of Fellowship to one another.

Ministers are the *Pastors* of the Flock, and it is of greater Consequence, that there should be no Strife between them, than it was of old, that there should be none between *Abraham's Herdsmen and Lot's*. No wonder the Sheep are frightened and scatter'd from them, when they see them biting and devouring one another. They are Leaders of the People, and if they disagree, how can the People safely follow them? The Church is the *Body of Christ*, Ministers in it are such Parts of the Body, as are especially necessary and useful for the Conveyance of that Life which floweth from Christ the Head, unto all the Members. The disuniting of them, is like dissecting the Nerves and Veins; and causeth such a Schism in the Body, as endangers the speedy perishing of it. Without Union among themselves, they cannot serve the Purpose of their Institution; which is the Church's Unity; that all the Members of it might be compacted, and knit together, and made one intire Body, *Eph. 4. 11, 12, 13.*

Unity betwixt the Ministers of Christ, is of great Advantage to convince Men of the Truth of their Doctrine, and to perswade them to embrace it; as we may learn from Christ's Prayer, *John 17. 21.* And the contrary, Experience sheweth us, is a great Stumbling-block to People, and Hindrance of their profiting by the Word. *Behold, how good, and how pleasant it is for such Brethren to dwell together in Unity!* * It renders their Ministry fragrant, as the precious Ointment on *Aaron's* Head; and useful as the Dew of *Hermon*, the Dew that descended on the Mountains of *Zion*. *How beautiful upon the Mountains*, says the evangelical Prophet, *are the Feet of him that bringeth good Tydings* †. As a Reason 'tis added, *Thy Watchmen shall lift up the Voice, with the Voice together shall they sing*—shall sweetly agree together, have but one Voice—with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God, *even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Now a Dove-like Spirit in Ministers wou'd bring them to this happy Union and Communion: Engage them in such a friendly Correspondence with one another, as wou'd cherish

* Psal. 133. 1. † Psal. 52. 7.

and increase mutual Love and Good-Will ; procure mutual Help, yield mutual Encouragement and Comfort. It wou'd suppress the Spirit that lusteth to envy, and make every one to rejoice in another's Gifts, Graces, Acceptance, and Success. None would preach Christ of Envy and Strife, and meerly in Pretence : All wou'd do it of good Will, and Sincerely---with hearty Affection toward Christ, and every good Minister of his.---And in their Conversation wou'd take heed, that they neither speak, nor act any Thing, to the Prejudice of one another's Reputation, and Impediment of their Serviceableness : But on the other Hand, to speak respectfully to, and of one another ; and having Gifts differing, according to the Grace that is given to them, to endeavour that all may have their full Improvement to the Benefit and Edification of the Church.

These Properties of a Dove-like Spirit render the Man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

I. The Candidates of the evangelical Ministry may be hence admonished, what Qualification they need have to their Entrance thereinto.

A vain Pretence to the *Holy Spirit's* making them fit for this Office, without proper Education, and painful Study, is not encouraged by this Discourse. Happy is our Land, in Regard of the Seminaries of Learning, planted in it, and that they are in so good a State as they be at this Day, under the Tuition of skilfull and faithful Men. And we can't expect, that ordinarily Ministers will come to our Churches in the *excellent Spirit*, which has been describ'd, unless they do come out of the *Schools of the Prophets*, furnished with competent Knowledge, which they acquire by Industry in the Use of suitable Means, and receive not by meer Infusion. The Scripture doth not represent those as Gospel-Times of Reformation, in which Persons that have been train'd up from their Youth only to secular Business, do undertake, and are countenanc'd in, that of the sacred Ministry : But on the contrary, that when God shall cause the *unclean Spirit* to pass out of the Land, and any such shall yet presume to Prophecy, his nearest Relatives shall withstand him, and he shall be asham'd to appear in the Habit, and further to attempt the Work of a Prophet ; but shall confess, as in Zech. 13. 5. *I am no Prophet,*

phet, I am an Husbandman ; for Men taught me to keep Cattle from my Youth. Whoever wou'd be an able Minister of the new Testament, must diligently improve all Advantages of a liberal Education to that Purpose. Yet if his Furniture consists only in the desirable and useful Gifts of Knowledge, Elocution, and the like humane Acquirements and Embellishments, it may be said to him, as in another Case it was to a well-bred young Man, *One Thing thou lackest* †. And that is, a Dove-like, a Christ-like Spirit : A Soul form'd by the *Holy Ghost* to Purity, Innocence, Meekness, Humility, and Love. The Graces which constitute this divine Temper, are so necessary to a Minister's approving himself to GOD, and to his own Conscience, in his Work, that, if the Performance and Success of it were less concern'd therein, than really they be, no considerate Person, who knew himself destitute of 'em, wou'd for all this World dare to meddle with so holy and tremendous an Office.

What GOD saith to the Wicked, *Psal. 50. 16.* would, like a flaming Sword, keep the Way of the Pulpit from his entering therein? Verily, saith Mr. *Baxter*, it is the common Danger and Calamity of the Church, to have unregenerate and unexperienc'd Pastors : And to have so many become Preachers, before they are Christians ; to be sanctified by Dedication to the Altar as God's Priests, before they are sanctified by hearty Dedication to Christ as his Disciples."---Let every one design'd and preparing for the Ministry, remember the Exhortation, in *2 Tim. 2. 22.* *Flee also youthful Lusts : But follow Righteousness, Faith, Charity, Peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure Heart.* Take heed also and beware of an enthusiastick, and of a Party-Spirit ; the Ingredients of both which Kinds, are contrary and destructive to those of the Spirit, which has been recommended.

2. They that are in the Ministry, should examine themselves, and *know what Manner of Spirit they are of.* Are we qualified for, and do we attend the Business of our holy Calling—with the Spirit that descended and abode upon our glorious Head, *the Lord Jesus Christ* ? Were we moved by the *Holy Ghost*, to undertake this Office ? Are our own Consciences Witnesses, and GOD also, that we have behaved our selves in it, holily, and justly, and unblameably, and meekly,

† Mark 10. 21.

with Lowliness of Mind, Tenderneſs of Affection, and Sweetneſs of brotherly Love ? There has been a Trial of our Spirits ; and have we diſcover'd ſo much of a Dove-like Diſpoſition as we ought ? Was it not for want of ſuch a Spirit, in greater Meaſures of it, that there has been ſo much Offence given, and taken, to the Reproach and Damage of the Miniſtry ? That we have been ſo divided in our Work, and Way --- ſo full of Jealouſies and raſh judging---ſo apt to divulge, and pleas'd to hear Things tending to one another's Diſgrace and Diſadvantage---that in a Difference of Sentiments, we did not guard more againſt the ill Conſequences thereof, and could not bear with one another in Love---that there have been ſo ſharp Conteſts between Fellow-Labourers, and mutual Smitings of Fellow-Servants---ſuch intemperate Zeal, and ſatyrical Virulence, as hath brought much Smoke and Darkneſs into the Sanctuary ? *Only by Pride cometh Contention :* To this is owing the Noiſe and Clamour of Controverſy, which hath greatly diſturbed the Peace of the Churches. To the ſame Cauſe muſt be imputed all undue Reſentment of Wrong done us by any, in cenſuring our State, diſparaging our Labours, and drawing away from among our People Diſciples after them. It argues the Defect of a uniting Spirit among us, that when we were not all of one Mind in ſome Matters, we did not hold Communion and Correſpondency, and join together in the main, and do as much of God's Work as we could in concurrent Unanimity, according to the *Apoſtle's* Advice in *Phil.* 3. 16. But diſagreeing in Opinion concerning ſome Appearances of Religion, and Methods of promoting it, we grew ſtrange to one another, left off aſſociating together as before, and ſhun'd a Communication of miniſterial Labours : For the laſt of which our Excuse is no Evidence of a peaceable Spirit among us---viz. Miniſters ſo often chuſing to inſiſt upon the offensive Peculiarities of the Party they had eſpous'd, rather than upon the more weighty Things in which we are all agreed : And ſo we have ſeem'd to People as Preachers of two Chriſt's---Teachers of different Ways to Heaven.---In mentioning theſe Things, which breath not of a Dove-like Spirit, I intend not a Charge againſt all, but an Addreſs to the Conſciences of all, that we may reflect, and ſee how far we are all guilty before the omniscient Heart-ſearching GOD. We have thoſe whoſe Moderation has been known unto all Men, in the late *Provocation*, the Day of Temptation, that has paſſed over us. But upon impartial Enquiry

Enquiry may not the most of us discern great and manifold Defects, in this requisite ministerial Qualification ; and confess, that we have not taken Heed to our Spirit, as we should if we have kept our Mouth with a Bridle, in the fiercest Strife of Tongues ?---That we have too much indulg'd the Ferments of Anger in our Bosoms, the Workings of Pride and Envy, tho' we may not have rendered Railing for Railing ; and have escaped the Character *Jude* gives of heretical Teachers, who, in speaking evil of *Dignities*, contumeliously of the *Apostles*, *Were like raging Waves of the Sea, foaming out their own Shame* : Not using so much Modesty in their Treatment of the Governors of the Church, as *Michael the Arch-Angel* did toward *Satan* (contending with him about the *Body of Moses*) Can we answer our Judge, when he shall demand of us, what was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the Way ? We must stand Speechless, if it was which should be greatest *. Alas ! how often hath Pride and Ambition divided the Ministers of the humble and meek Jesus ? How sadly is it to be lamented, that a Spirit of Bitterness, Envy, and Malignity, should ever so far prevail among them, as to give Occasion for a *Melanchton* on his Death-Bed, to bless God that he was going to a Place where he should be freed from the implacable Hatred of Divines ! Have we not experienc'd enough of it in our Days, to make a Lover of Peace sometimes ready to wish as *David*, *O that I had Wings like a Dove : For then would I fly away, and be at Rest* †. Discord among Brethren in the Ministry is not the less to be reprov'd and bewail'd, for God's over-ruling it, as he did that between *Paul* and *Barnabas*, to the enlarging of his Kingdom, and making it subservient to his own Glory, and Church's Good.

3. Let us seek that we may be qualified more and better for the Work of the Gospel-Ministry, by the *Spirit's* descending like a *Dove*, and resting on us, according to the *Measure of the Gift of Christ* : That we may receive Grace, bearing some Proportion and Similitude to the Grace which was conferred on Christ himself, when God, his God, anointed him with the Oil of Gladness above his Fellows—be endowed with those Properties which are symbolically in Doves, were truly and superlatively in Christ, and by Participation of his Spirit ; are really in all good Ministers of his. The forming of a pure,

* Mark 9. 33. † Psal. 55. 6.

innocent, meek, humble, compassionate, uniting Spirit in us, is rather to be desired than the *Holy Ghost's* descending in a *Bodily Shape, like a Dove*, upon us. "The Word comes from the Spirit, and the Spirit comes along with the Word--- O that in and by his Word, Christ would now *breathe upon us*, and say, *Receive the Holy Ghost* † : As he did to his *Apostles*, sending them forth to preach, as the Father had sent him. Vain are our Pretences to the Spirit of Christ, if we are void of those amiable Qualities, which were so conspicuous and exemplary in him. *The Fruit of the Spirit* growing from and arguing the Root of Grace in the Heart, is *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance*. The Spirit indeed descended on the *Apostles*, in the Emblem of *fiery Tongues*, to signify the Purity and Zeal with which they, and all succeeding Ministers should be furnish'd to their Work, and not the Heat of wrathful Passion, in which they should speak, and act. Some may be ready to applaud themselves for having bitter Zeal and Strife in their Hearts, and may glory in this as true Wisdom, and the Power of the Spirit in them, but this ' Wisdom descendeth not from above ; it is earthly, sensual, devilish--- The Wisdom that is ' from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy ' to be entreated, full of Mercy, and good Fruits, without ' Partiality, and without Hypocrisy. *The Lord is not in the Wind* of boisterous Passion ; nor in the *Fire* of over-heated Zeal ; nor in the *Earthquake* of intestine Jars, and destructive Schisms ; but in the *still small Voice* of Dove-like Simplicity, Innocence, Meekness, Lowliness, and Love.

With the Qualities of the *Dove* in Ministers, there must be one of the *Serpent*, viz. its Wisdom, according to our Saviour's Direction, *Matth. 10. 16.* but there should be no more, else this will make them dangerous and hurtful as *Wolves*, against which it is necessary to guard them, while they are *harmless as Doves*. There must be in them, with the Wisdom of the *Serpent*, none of its deceitful Windings, " of its lurking Insidiousness, of its surprizing Violence, of its rancorous Venom, of its keen Mordacity." There must be all of the *Dove*, which has been mentioned.

If a Dove-like Spirit possesseth and acteth us, we shall engage and proceed in our Work, with disinterested Views, uprightly, steadily, inoffensively, circumspectly, gently, hum-

† John 20. 22.

bly, unitedly: "In all Things approving our selves as the
 Ministers of God; in much Patience, in Afflictions, in
 Necessities, in Distresses; in Stripes, in Imprisonments
 (should we be counted worthy, and called to suffer in that
 Manner for the Name of Christ) in Tumults, in Labours,
 in Watchings, in Fastings: By Pureness, by Knowledge,
 by Long-suffering, by Kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by
 Love unfeigned, by the Word of Truth, by the Power of
 God, by the Armour of Righteousness, on the right Hand,
 and on the left, by Honour and Dishonour, by evil Report
 and good Report: As Deceivers, and yet true; as Sorrow-
 ful, yet always rejoicing; as Poor, yet making many rich."
 Our Mouth will be open to our Hearers, our Heart enlarged---
 They'll not be straitned in us, tho' they may be straitned in
 their own Bowels, in good Affection toward us.

While we make our selves Servants unto all, we may ap-
 pear mean and abject in the Eyes of the World, be despised
 of Men, treated as Scullions, kept in a low Condition, be-
 smear'd with the Dirt and Soot of Reproach, so that our *Visage*,
 like that of *Zion's Nazarites*, be blacker than a Coal; yet shall
 we be glorious in the Eyes of God and Angels; our spiri-
 tual Dignity and Beauty shall not be impair'd but encreased,
 our Graces brightned and strengthened, and we shall shine
 with the greater Lustre of Ministerial Faithfulness, and hea-
 venly Glory---that being verified in us, *Psal.* 68. 13. 'Tho'
 ye have lien among the Pots, yet shall ye be as the Wings
 of a Dove covered with Silver, and her Feathers with yel-
 low Gold.'

Our Hearts and Hands will be united in the Work of God:
 and we shall assist and strengthen, encourage and comfort one
 another in it. We shall take sweet Counsel together, and
 walk unto the House of God in Company. In Lowliness of
 Mind each will esteem others better than themselves; and none
 of us will magnify our selves by running down others; and
 on all Occasions inveighing without Mercy against erroneous,
 unconverted, or enthusiastic Ministers, where, and when,
 such cannot be reprov'd by our Discourse, while People are
 prejudic'd thereby against those who deserve a better Character.
 There would not be a *Diotrephes* among us, loving to have
 the Pre-eminence †, and prating against others with malicious
 Words---nor (I presume) a *Busy-body* in other Mens Matters *

† 3 John ver. 9, 10. * 1 Pet. 4. 15. Αλλοτριοεπισκεπτης
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according to the original Sound, and just Sense of the Phrase. We should in the Spirit of Love, rectify one anothers Mistakes, and bear with each others Infirmities---sympathize with, and Support one another under all our Burdens, rejoice in one anothers Gifts and Graces, Reputation and Usefulness---Dividing Schemes would be laid aside, and Party Names lost from among us. The only Contention among us will be, who shall best serve the *Lord Jesus Christ*, and promote the real Interests of People, in the most important and weighty Matters of Religion, and carry the Spirit of Forbearance the furthest in all lesser Matters. My Fathers and Brethren, ‘ If there be therefore any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies---let us be like-minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind.’---O how much Good to these Churches would a happy Union among their Pastors presage? How might they flourish in Peace and spiritual Prosperity, after they have been afflicted, tossed with Tempests, and not Comforted? With what Joy would they sing, as in the mystical Song †---‘ Lo, the Winter is past, the Rain is over and gone. The Flowers appear on the Earth, the Time of the Singing of Birds is come, and the Voice of the Turtle is heard in our Land.

4. Let the People also, here assembled with the Ministers, to join in the solemn Devotions, and assist in the pious Collections of this Day, suffer the Word of Exhortation, and be quickened from what they have heard, to seek that the Spirit may descend as a Dove upon them. ‘ If any Man (be he Clergy or Lay-Man) have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.’ † And if he hath not a Dove-like Spirit, he hath not Christ’s. It is for a Lamentation, that the Spirit of the late Times hath not been more so: That while many have been ready to boast of their receiving the *Holy Ghost*; in a Way and Measure not common to ordinary Christians, People have in divers Places been like *Vultures* and *Ravens*, Birds of Prey, biting and devouring one another, rashly censuring of, and separating from their Ministers. And *God’s Heritage* is now as a *speckled Bird*, the Birds round about are against her *. And we need pray, as in Psal. 74. 19. ‘ O deliver not the Soul of thy Turtle-Dove unto the Multitude of the Wicked.’ For

† Cant. 2. 11, 12. † Rom. 8. 9. * Jer. 12. 9.

the Enmities and Animosities among GOD's People upon the Score of our Differences in Religion, he justly maketh us a *Strife unto our popish and heathen Neighbours*. And if we become not a Prey to them, yet our Enemies may laugh among themselves to see us likely to be consumed one of another. God only knows what the End of the present Quarrels, that so disturb the State and Church, may be. But this People do, or should know, that they cannot be Christians without the Spirit of Christianity---They are apt to say, *lo, here is Christ, or there!* In this or the other Set of Principles, in this or the other Way of Worship; when, verily, Christ is not here, nor there, nor any where, but where the *Spirit of Christ* is. Let us therefore pray for a more conspicuous, abundant and universal Descent of the Spirit from Heaven as a Dove, both on Ministers and People, than we have yet seen, and can bear Record of.

And in this Spirit of Christ let us now offer to the Service of his Gospel, and for the Relief of necessitous Souls, a Part of our worldly Substance---So our Charity will be an *Odour of a sweet Smell, a Sacrifice* well-pleasing to GOD. Let this Spirit actuate us in all that we do in Religion; then our Prayers and Praises, our Preaching and Hearing, and all devotional Performances will be acceptable to the Lord. And the Communion of Saints therein, sweet and comfortable to us---Cant. 2. 14. *O my Dove, that art in the Clefts of the Rock, in the secret Places of the Stairs; let me see thy Countenance, let me hear thy Voice; for sweet is thy Voice, and thy Countenance is comely.* We shall serve GOD in the Purity and Simplicity of Gospel-Obedience, and dwell together in Love; keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, 'till we arrive at the perfect Unity of the Faith, and the Fulness of Christ, and borne up on the Wings of the heavenly DOVE, shall be carried to our everlasting Rest.

A M E N.



The Reader is desired to correct the following Errata.

Page 11. Line 9. for *mean* Things, read *Men and Things* Page 13. Line 21. for *predominated*, read *predominantly*. Page 14. Line last, for *uncooth*, read *uncouth*. Page 25. Line 5. for *in*, read *on*. Line 15. for *Lowness*, read *Lowliness*. Page 24. Line 15. for *sociable*, read *social*.

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